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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 001684

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SA, SA/INS; NSC FOR E. MILLARD

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [EINV](#) [US](#) [CE](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: Ambassador Lunstead presents credentials to President Kumaratunga

(U) Classified by Ambassador Jeffrey J. Lunstead.  
Reasons 1.5 (b,d).

1. (C) The Ambassador, accompanied by the Deputy Chief of Mission, called on President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga on the evening of September 26 at her official residence to present his credentials. In a very brief ceremony (according to Sri Lankan practice, no formal remarks were made or handed over), the Ambassador presented his letters of credence and the recall letter of his predecessor and conveyed to the President the warm greetings of President Bush and Secretary Powell. The President then invited the

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Ambassador to join her for tea in a neighboring room.

2. (C) The Ambassador opened the half-hour tea discussion by noting that he was honored that the President had taken the time to receive him on what must be a difficult day for her -- the 44th anniversary of her father's assassination. The Ambassador told the President that her personal record of tragedy, with family members murdered and a bomb attack on her that left her injured, illustrated the tremendous sacrifices she had endured in her pursuit of peace in Sri Lanka. She should be proud of this commitment. The President expressed her thanks for the Ambassador's sentiments. She said that it indeed was a difficult day. She said her security detail "prevailed on me" at the last minute not to attend the anniversary commemoration in honor of her father at Horagolla outside of Colombo since there were concerns about LTTE "penetration" of the event.

3. (C) The President concurred that her family history was a sad one but noted that it paralleled the sad history of the country. "Our history shows a lack of strong leaders. When we've had strong leaders they've been killed." She then reviewed her efforts to promote peace and political devolution over the years and commented with some bitterness that if the current Prime Minister had supported her efforts to accomplish what he is now trying to accomplish, "maybe we would have peace by now."

4. (C) President Kumaratunga turned to the LTTE and told the Ambassador that the firm U.S. line against the terrorist organization had, in her view, clearly had a strong impact on the group. "You have held firm. Others, like the EU and Norway, are too easily hoodwinked." The Ambassador reviewed for the President the mechanics of the U.S. Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) process and told her that the group would be redesignated in early October with a public announcement. "Good," the President said. "I agree with you." She noted with some vehemence that LTTE leader Prabhakaran in particular was not to be trusted. "Too many are duped by him."

5. (C) The Ambassador told the President that he was accredited to the entire Sri Lankan government and that he looked forward to working with both her and the Prime Minister and with all other elements of the Sri Lankan government. He noted that the U.S. stands ready to help in any number of ways to promote peace and economic development but that only Sri Lankans can do what needs to be done. The President said she appreciated the Ambassador's comments and agreed completely. She nodded enthusiastically when the Ambassador said he would be honored to meet with her on a regular basis to discuss the issues of the day. "I look forward to it," President Kumaratunga said, suggesting they might meet on a monthly basis.

6. (C) The conversation concluded with a discussion of U.S. investment in Sri Lanka. The Ambassador gave the President an overview of both actual U.S. commercial activities and the many expressions of interest from U.S. companies. The President was particularly interested in potential U.S. involvement in the information technology sector and told the Ambassador that she would like to meet with Microsoft executives

during their upcoming visit.

17. (C) COMMENT. The President was gracious and cordial although her bitterness quickly bubbled to the surface when the LTTE and the UNP government were discussed. Chief of Protocol commented that the half-hour discussion was unusual, as such events normally last no longer than ten minutes. The Ambassador will follow up to establish a regular schedule of monthly meetings with the President. END COMMENT.

18. (U) Minimize considered.

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